

## 'Aharya' : Make-up and Costume

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MARGI SOMADAS AND AMMANNUR KOCHUKUTTAN CHAKYAR

**T**he characters in Kūtiyāttam are classified as Paccha :noble type like Sree Rama; Katti : high-born, but treading the evil path like Ravana; Tadi : Sage type like Hanuman and monkeys like Bali and Sugriva; Minukku: less important character like Narada/females; Pazhukka: special types like Bhima, Vidyadhara, Kapali.

Traditionally the Nambiar (whose main role is playing the *mizhavu*) used to look after the costume and make-up aspects of Kūtiyāttam. Now that Kūtiyāttam too has come out of the strict confines of the temples, the make-up is now taken care of by a separate class of make-up artistes who are common to allied arts like Kathakali, etc. Here also there are variations. The Kūtiyāttam actors of Kerala Kalamandalam and Margi are themselves capable of attending to make-up to a point.

The first step in starting the make-up prior to a performance is the tying of the 'choppu thuni' (red cloth) on the actor's head after a purificatory bath (between the time of tying this red cloth and taking it off at the end of the performance, the actor is in a blessed state—even the death of his close relatives cannot cast any pollution on him). After this the eyebrows and eyelashes, etc. are painted. As in Kathakali a sign is painted on the forehead at the beginning. This is called *kuri* which are of the following types. For the actor Sankukarna, this *kuri* is 'V' shaped and red in colour and a border with rice paste surrounds it.

For Vibhishana the *kuri* is gopi or ourdhwa *kunram* shaped (  ). On both sides the rice-paste border is also done. For Samvarana the *kuri* is termed *pula* flower and shaped and is in red colour (  ). For Maricha and Surpanakha, the *kuri* is trident-shaped.

### *Paccha type*

The next step is fixing the boundary for painting the face. This is very important particularly since the distinction with Kathakali facial make-up has to be well borne in mind as explained later. The boundary line cannot be farther from the eye border by more than the width of four tooth-picks. For Kathakali the boundary line can be farther from the eyes. Special care is needed for Kūtiyāttam make-up in this respect, because Kūtiyāttam characters have to recite slokas and their facial movements have greater liquidity, when compared to Kathakali. Another reason is that the headgears in Kūtiyāttam are also much smaller in size as compared to those on Kathakali. After this the finer details are done to the face. The material used for painting the face is called *manayola* which is a naturally occurring substance in the soil (having a good measure of sulphur) and is beneficial to the facial skin unlike synthetic chemicals used in common make-up. The manayola is mixed with clarified butter of the cow before applying in the face. (For Kathakali the solvent used is coconut oil) Clarified butter is preferable due to its special shine and its soothing

effects on the facial muscles. The eyes are then treated with 'chundappaovu, the dried seed of the *chunda* flower. This gives the eyes a special type of brightness (redness), thereby adding to the aesthetic effect of the expressions and eye movements. This is all too important in *Kūtiyāṭṭam* due to the very great scope for eye-movements in its scheme of histrionics.

The legs are painted with rice paste. The main wear is the 'Thattu' or white cloth worn around the waist and covering the legs. Here we have an interesting comparison with the Kathakali wear which has billowing skirts, the object of which is to give full freedom to the legs for elaborate and fast-paced pure dance movements (*nṛitta*). The torso is covered by the characteristic *kuppayam* or jacket with red and black stripes.

The ornaments (costume jewellery) are mainly bangles around the wrists, shoulder bands (*tolvala*), jewel chains round the neck resting on the chest (*kazhutharam* or *pozhumbu*), and waist band (*katisutra*). The next step is the fixing of the headgear. A black cloth is tied first on head. This is followed by fixing a series of adornments for the ear and head termed *Kundalam*, *Kuzhal*, *Panakkettu*, *Vasukiyan*, *Pilippattam*, *Chuttithuni*, *Chevippoovu*, *Pinmara* etc. For Paccha roles requiring 'Kesabharam' e.g. *Arjuna*, *Kuzhal*, *Panakkettu* and *Vasukiyan* will not be there. In their place the *Kesabharam Kireetam* is fixed on the head. The former is fixed only on Pacha roles like *Sree Rama*, *Lakshmana* etc.

#### *Katti type*

Now let us have a look at the 'Kathi' type of make-up (evil characters like Ravana). Here the difference from Kathakali is minimal. There is difference in the mark on the forehead. The chuttipoovu or the white appendage stuck on the tip of the nose is cut in the shape of a flower for *Kūtiyāṭṭam* (This is more suited to *Kūtiyāṭṭam*). The other adornments are the same as for Paccha. The headgear for Katti type however is *kesabhara* (the big crown). For Ravana alone there is a special type of garland like adornment for the chest portion. The general size (area) of the facial painting will be bigger than in paccha.

#### *Tadi type*

This covers characters like Hanuman, Sugreeva, Bali etc. Even among these there are differences in the facial painting and headgear. For Bali, the headgear is *Kesabhara Kirita* (the big crown). The face is painted red and green. There are some extra garlands to wear on the chest (*thoongu mala*). There is also a small tail.

For Sugriva, the beard is black in colour. The headgear is of *kuzhal* and *makuta* (a small crown). For Hanuman the headgear is the smaller *kuzhal* and *makuta*, white in colour. The chest jacket is also white and made of cotton wool. In the facial painting and make-up also cotton wool is used. There is a tail too. For Bhima, the colour of the facial painting is *pazhukka* or deep brown or light red, literally the colour of the ripe arecanut husk. The beard is red and headgear the *kuzhal* and *makuta*.

For Jatayu, the bigger headgear (*kesabhara kirita*) to which there is a special appendage of peacock feather is used. Peacock feather is also employed liberally for the

shoulder and chest adornments to give emphasis to the 'bird' type which Jatayu is. There is also a small beak appended to the lips, black in colour. The jacket is made of cotton wool. There are special black lines painted on the face.

For Surpanakha, the face is painted black. The headgear is of *kuzhal* and *makutam* type, but made of a particular kind of flower. There is no covering for the torso. Instead it is painted black. Two long protruding fixtures are used in the place of the breasts (*kuttumula* or protruding breasts)

#### *Minukku type*

Narada, Suta (Charioteer), Sutradhara, Jambavan etc. belong to this type. The facial painting is simplistic, being confined to smearing with clarified butter and small markings in black for the eyes, eyebrows and forehead.

Though 'Stree Vesham' (female roles) is classified under *minukku* type, the face painting traditionally followed is of the *pazhukka* format described under *tadi* type. (Now there is a tendency to use synthetic cosmetic-base creams, etc.) The body adornments take after the *Pacha* style, but are smaller in size. The headgear is *makuta* or a red hemispherical crown. Other items like *kundalam* and *chevippoovu* are all there.

Vasantaka in *Mantrankam* (Act III of Bhasa's *Pratijnayaugandharayana*) is a very interesting and special type of character from the point of view of costume and make-up. The added features are *pirisankhumala* (a small garland made of special conch-like material), *kundala* (ear pieces) *kuduma* (tuft of hair), etc. The body is painted with white rice paste like that of the *Vidushaka*. Another interesting and special character is *Kapali* (wanderer) in *Mattavilasam*. The face painting for *Kapali* is however red.

The headgear and the bigger pieces worn in the body like *katisutra* etc. are made of wood. Ornamental engravings are done on it as also fixing of shiny metal and quick-silver-like pieces. Gold-coloured paper is liberally used. The other ingredients that are used as adhesives etc. are bees wax (preferably from the tiny honey bees 'Cheruthenmezhu') or the gum of Jack tree.

In the olden times, the headgear used to be made on the date of the performance or for a series of performances every time. The material used in such circumstances were of a perishable nature like plantain stem, and colourful flowers of varying hues. But, in our times this has given place to making the pieces with more stable material like wood etc, which can be used over a longer period of time.

(*Aharya* in *Kūtiyāttam* became inextricably linked with its *Kathakali* counterpart for very obvious reasons. While *Kūtiyāttam* was on a steady course of decline, due to its low popularity, *Kathakali* was more active. With the decline of *Kūtiyāttam* its *Aharya* conventions and practices also went into almost total obscurity. So when a revival process started for *Kūtiyāttam* in recent times, the costume and make-up aspects naturally looked up to *Kathakali* (on pragmatic considerations) for make-up artistes, material, etc. No doubt the individuality and special requirements of *Kūtiyāttam* characters and conventions were well taken care of by the present Gurus.)

### Typology of Make-up

	Make-up	Types	Character
1.	Paccha	I	Sreerama Vibhishana
2.	Paccha	II	Arjuna
3.	Paccha & Black Beard		Maricha
4.	Pazhuppu	I	Sutradhara Rishikumara
5.	Pazhuppu	II	Samvarana
6.	Chayilyam		Bhima
7.	Ghee-Makeup-1		Suta
8.	Ghee-Make-up II		Narada
9.	Ghee-Make-up III		Jambava
10.	Black Beard		Sugriva
11.	Red Beard		Bali
12.	White Beard		Hanuman
13.	Bird		Jatayu
14.	Kurumkatti		Sankukaranan (old style)
15.	Katti		Ravana
16.	Female: old style		Subhadra in many plays.
17.	Female new style	}	
18.	Vidushaka		